

Opening Remarks

Jack Sullivan, Acting Administrator, Division of Enforcement and Science on behalf of **Scott Hassett**, Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Good morning.

On behalf of Secretary Hassett and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, I want to welcome you and thank you for participating in this workshop. It is exciting to see so many people interested in today's topic. Secretary Hassett wanted to be here, but was called away to assist Governor Doyle with some important state business.

As an agency, the Wisconsin DNR is pleased to co-sponsor this second "Changing Landscapes" workshop. We look forward to an energetic day-and-a-half. Before we go much further, however, I again want to acknowledge and thank the other co-sponsors for their time and effort. The Rock River Coalition, 1,000 Friends of Wisconsin, Gathering Waters Conservancy, Wisconsin Realtors Association, the Departments of Transportation and Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, UW-Extension, the University of Wisconsin's Land Information and Computer Graphics Facility and Department of Urban and Regional Planning, UW-Stevens Point's Center for Land Use Education, and the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association contributed to the planning and support of this workshop. We are honored to have such wonderful planning partners. I also want to welcome our friends from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 5 office, Michigan State University, and the University of Akron. We are glad they are able to join us.

As many of you know, land use and the environmental effects of land use decisions were important issues for previous DNR secretaries. Both George Meyer and Darrell Bazzell brought land use issues to the forefront of DNR's thinking. Secretary Hassett also believes that land use must continue to be a priority for state government and the DNR. Staff members throughout our agency continue to work to better define and implement our role in land use decision-making.

We recognize, however, that land use and decisions about land uses are inherently local and personal. Whether it's the apple and cherry orchards of Door County, Milwaukee's urban skyline, the Mississippi River's magnificent bluffs, the agricultural fields of the Central Sands, or the vast forests of the North, it is land use that fosters our sense of place and defines our community character. I know this well as a local elected official.

Equally true is that *all* land use decisions have consequences. These decisions can affect the quality of our environment, a community or region's character, and the costs of infrastructure and services. As a local elected official, I also know this to be true.

The DNR and others have long promoted local and regional comprehensive planning. Such planning provides a means of balancing the diverse personal preferences, priorities, and personalities in a community with the consequences and public benefits of land use decisions. We continue to believe that such planning can lead to sound land use and "smart growth."

This workshop builds on the DNR's role in land use in three ways: first, as a technical assistance provider, second, as a neighbor, and, finally, as a supporter of "smart growth" and comprehensive planning. I want to touch briefly on each of these roles.

First, the Wisconsin DNR plays an important role as a technical resource for helping others with land use decisions. We prefer to assist local decision-makers when we can, rather than serve as an authoritarian body regulating prescribed outcomes. That's a primary reason we are interested in looking at these computer-based decision support tools.

In the development of decision support tools, technology developers look to give us access to information previously limited to academics and specialists. Decision support tools allow us to evaluate the nonpersonal aspects of land use decisions. Incorporating decision support tools into the inherently political local land use decision-making process can:

- ◆ Separate the personal issues from the technical or scientific issues

- ◆ Inform our planning processes and help us understand the consequences of potential land use change
- ◆ Save money, by avoiding costly land use mistakes

Today, through the worldwide web, both planning professionals and citizen planners have access to data, information, and tools that can help them in their efforts. Computer technologies empower everyday citizens to do things that once required training or special access to sophisticated information. Today, we are going to focus on some of the computer-based tools that can aid us in understanding the impacts of our land use decisions. The focus on these decision support tools, however, does not displace the importance of public involvement in local decision making. As a local elected official, I know first hand how important involving the full range of stakeholders is in making decisions. Involving the public also includes involving our corporate partners (i.e. business and industry) and managers of public facilities in our dialog. Doing so early and often improves our decisions.

During the course of this workshop, presenters will share with you a framework of decision support tools. Of course, it is not possible to demonstrate all the tools that exist today. Nor, is it our intention to single out or endorse a specialized set of tools. Rather, the tools that are presented here represent a framework for understanding the kinds of decision support tools that exist, and the appropriate function or scenario in which they are useful. We're looking forward to hearing your reaction to and evaluation of these tools.

Secondly, this workshop results from the fact that the Wisconsin DNR is also often a member of the community – we own and manage lands for the public that are impacted by land use decisions made at the local level. Decision support tools can help local decision-makers help us protect and manage public lands as an integral part of their communities. We count on local officials to make informed, environmentally sensitive decisions and university research shows that local officials want to make just those types of decisions.

The fact that the DNR is a major landowner in so many communities underscores the importance of working with other units of government. Intergovernmental cooperation and coordination have become more and more important for accomplishing our protection and management goals. State-owned lands are often resources of regional significance and the effects of their management often extend beyond the boundaries of any one governmental unit. As a partner, DNR can help foster and participate in regional approaches. Decision support tools can help us do this.

Finally, this workshop complements DNR's ongoing support for "smart growth" and comprehensive planning. Our regional program staff members are resource management and environmental experts. They can bring considerable knowledge and expertise to your local planning processes. We continue to encourage, and expect, communities to tap into that expertise as they prepare "smart growth" comprehensive plans. Specifically, DNR staff can set aside time to:

- provide and interpret environmental information,
- predict impacts from decisions,
- actively participate in developing alternatives, and
- promote sound land use.

As many of you know, the state budget situation has required DNR and other state agencies to reduce staff and scale back efforts in a number of areas. We anticipate additional reductions as the state recovers from its fiscal woes. That makes the resource management and environmental protection efforts of local people and local governments all the more important. Comprehensive planning provides one avenue for citizens and elected officials to outline a vision for their community and identify means of accomplishing that vision. We respect this local process and embrace Wisconsin's proud tradition of being good stewards of our land and water resources.

In the future, the DNR hopes to work with workshop sponsors to provide additional technical assistance and training to local government officials, planners, developers, active citizens, and others interested in shaping land use decisions. You'll hear more about these efforts later in the workshop.

We are looking forward to hearing your feedback on this mix of tools. I wish you an enjoyable and productive day. Thanks again for participating.